SPECTRUM 2015

LITERARY & FINE ARTS MAGAZINE

SPECTRUM 2011
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EDITORIAL STAFF	ASHLEY FERGUSON
	LAUREN TAYLOR
	DAVID ANDERSON
ADVISOR	AARON CHANDLER

DESIGN

DESIGNER	NICHOLAS KANARY
ADVISOR	SUE OSBORN

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NIGHTSCAPE
ASHLEY FERGUSON

Like the spider's homely web,
In lines of quick, creamy fire,
It lay beneath me, pulsing and alight.

Gold collapsed into honey, into tangerine, into delicate magenta.
Still I resisted all but the black which berated the night below.

Like the trickle of manmade streams,
Caressed by fireflies and firecrackers,
Sparklers, embers, and flashlights,
I watched it slither beyond me, a serpent.

I knew it was there that you slept, in that spider web of tangled city streets,
Where the view was not as glorious nor as dark.

LINDSEY RAPP

LAWRENCE SEAWARD

THE YETI, VISITED

JASMINE LeMASTER

While walking through the woods
With the moss and the trees
I came upon a Yeti
With eyes of rhinestones
(not quite diamonds, you see,
but the plastic gems with bits
of foil on the back to reflect the light
and create the illusion of
magnificence)
and (s)he spoke to me and said,
"I am the Yeti, I speak for the trees.
I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues."
"You lie," I cried, "for that was actually the Lorax who said that"
(who I believe was really a midget Yeti.
He lived in a stump, and grew
a rather large moustache, probably
to make up for his lack of height,
and he loved nature so dearly, I believe
I must have been him in a past life.)
So hey Yeti – we are related, you and I
in a crazy midget triangle – not of love,
but of passion.
One with a bit more moustache.
One with a bit more foot,
And one who looks at you, and,
wonders what it's like to be a secret.

SAMANTHA AMY

ARDEN HALEY

WEEKDAY DISTRACTIONS

ASHLEY FERGUSON

He smelled like Chinese food.
For some reason,
it attracted me.
Every time he let out a sigh
I inhaled his sweet aroma.
I wanted to kiss him,
to taste those lips
that appealed to me on so many levels.
He leaned towards me often,
not seeming to notice
his change in posture
and stared into my eyes.
He let out another one of those breaths
…and I choked.

LINDSEY RAPP

THE SAME OLD STORY

MITCH MONIN

Once upon a time there were several squirrels.

(However many there were is never especially important, as long as there was more than one, for this could never happen if a squirrel had been left to its own contemplation.)

The air was warm and beautiful in the midday of late summer. The ground glowed golden through newly yellow leaves. Even from a high perch in the trees, the clouds seemed far away, passing by as slowly and steadily as though they were in a race.

Our friends, the squirrels, were not observing these fluffy clouds, for such clouds made them aware of the shagginess of their own tails, without which made them nothing more than rats who lived in trees. Nor were our squirrely friends gathering nuts, as squirrels must do. They reasoned that the weather was still too warm for worry, and they could not build up the proper amount of panic (that was required to accomplish anything) when the weather was this nice or the fun this plentiful.

So once again the day wore on and ended too shortly. The squirrels went to bed reasoning once again that the day had been "far too short to accomplish anything, anyhow."

Winter began the next day, and to the squirrels this seemed like a bad joke (not because it had not been funny, but because they had been the butt of it.) So, with rodents' panic, they set off in search of nuts.

And it was hard!

The ground had been slathered with snow which had fallen so quietly in the night that no squirrel could have heard it coming. Digging through the cold froze their fingers and feet. Our friends had the most trouble trying to get the nuts to appear. (It did not seem fair that so many nuts had "just seemed to show up" for the squirrels who had worked before them.)

Near the end of the day, as the air became hostile, one of the squirrels had run back to the searching group with a triumphant giggle. He had not found any nuts, but instead, as if by a miracle, he had found a plant that was still green despite the winter whirlwinds that froze the ground and squirrels so. It was sunset, and again the day had been too short to find nuts, so with an air of absolute relief the group of squirrels partook of the leaves of their friend's new plant.

CHRIS SIERADZAN

Now, they could not decide if this plant was helping them or hindering them (squirrels are not Nature's "deciders" by any means). It certainly took some of the hunger away, but far from all of it. Mostly, they decided that the plant was the least Nature could do for them as it aided them in their struggle for survival. They no longer worried that the day had been too short, or that their tummies still rumbled, or that there would be just as much winter tomorrow. They did not worry so much that they fell asleep by the side of the road, comfortably warming themselves with each other.

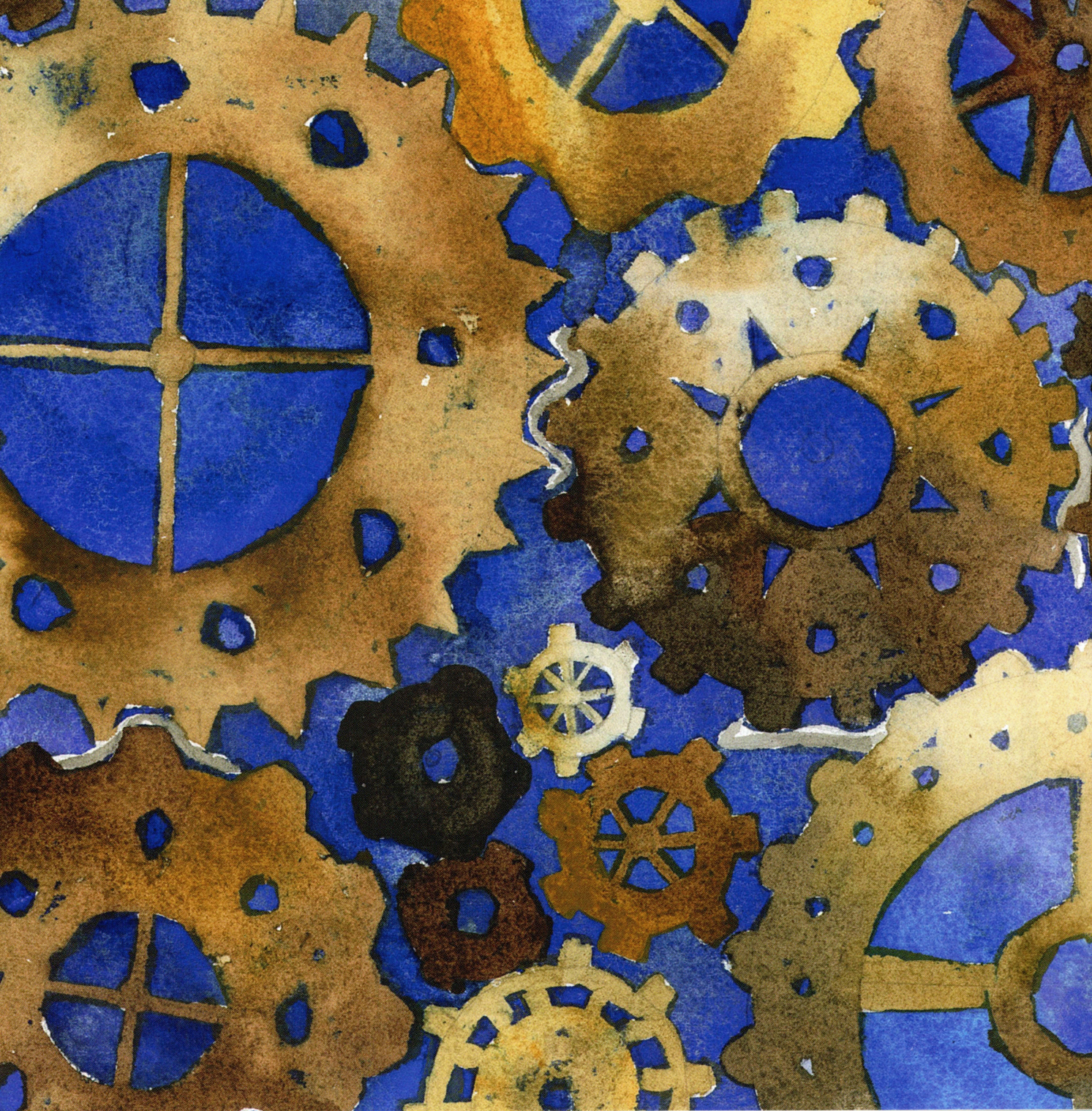
Life had bought a new car the day before. It was a beautiful, powerful vehicle, and looked far more expensive than Life could afford. He had had it painted black so he would not have to clean it often, but instead he would let the filth hide on it until an act of poetry could make it shine again. As eagerly as a child, Life celebrated his currently most favorite thing in the world by driving it around on the snowy, icy roads outside.

And, of course, as any and all manner of creature must do with their new cars, Life had to make sure the new car's speedometer was honest. The car was like a monster out of a fairytale (no pun intended). Fire shot from its muffler like a rocket launching to space and its speed was equal to the five hundred horses it boasted. Even on impossibly icy streets Life thought the car handled itself miraculously, which was good because Life was in no condition to control it (he was beginning to feel the joy of his celebratory drinks.)

Life's meeting with the squirrels was of average length. The sickening TH-THUMP had barely registered over the volcanic roar of the massive engine and the squeal of swerving tires. Life would not even know what he had done until he got back home, safe and sound, and saw the bright red stripe over the black paint job. Luckily, the stain was only visible if you were looking for it, so Life decided it was no big deal. Instead, he imputed "carwash" into his PDA, after "breakfast" but before "work." ✦

JOE L. WROTEN

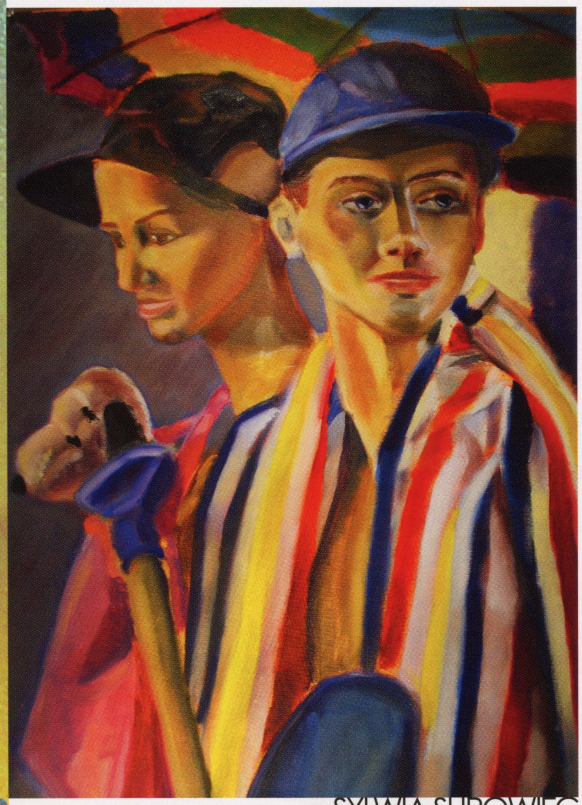
Watercolor on pages 6 and 7 by
MEGAN HAINES



BETTER THAN ME
KATIE BALLANCE

Break the silence exists, there's no creaks, no steps, no capacity for life. *Stop* you don't grasp how there is a departure from the normalcy. *Please* I'm not them. I don't act the same way. They separate me– they ignore me. *Don't* leave because it's not your scene. Rather they'd like you to go and make fun because it's a fantasy world. *Save* a memory for all your friends. They'll laugh about it over caviar. They'll show you how you're too good – but its anything better than *me*.

CORY ZANKER



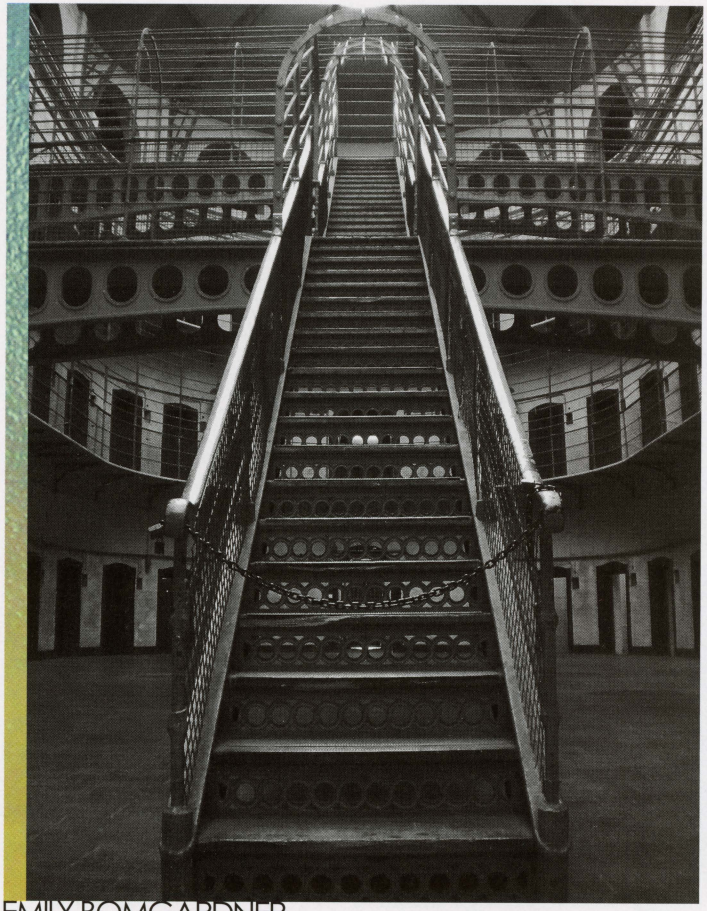
SYLWIA SUROWIEC

THE HOLE
JASMINE LeMASTER

I could tell you unbelievable, circular stories
that have not ended yet
and I'm not sure if they ever will.
I have been digging for two years now,
almost three, to be truthful,
and the circumference has grown exponentially each day.
I wonder when I will fall in.
The string tied around my waist is taut
and beginning to unravel.
The man and woman who molded me out of the mud
stand on the far side of the hole
and grow smaller in the distance.
They have not moved, but I have;
And even when I want to stop digging
the momentum of the past pushes my hands into the earth.

I peer in on occasion
and see a face at the bottom.
It is so old,
Dirt cakes the wrinkles and mud frosts the hair.
I know this face, it's familiar.
It is my face,
It is me.

TRAFFIC
CORY ZANKER



EMILY BOMGARDNER

i have changed right now and now
i have changed again with each
solitary stare that looks everywhere
behind closed eyes
every time i blink.
i can feel the air become steel as i
inject myself
for the fourth time today
for the hundredth day in one hundred
days for every day that is one day for
the rest of my existence which is only
the blink of an eye
for you
But i
am not dead
inside
Yet still
i wonder how it feels to leave
because the leaves die when they have
reached their true colors and they fly
like falling stars.
What can they see?
I have not slept for two nights and
while i move within patterns
i have seen the fox who lies dead
in the fast lane
while machines drown the rest of his dreams
with their engines screaming
Discontent.
i have learned
There is nothing i can preach to you
until you have smelled the entire world
without moving
Your heart has never moved.

ONE REAL COST OF WAR

SARAH WARRENFELTZ

March

Your eyes meet my gaze over
the pixilated connection.
How appropriate the azure Sky(pe).

But the sun trots not
through the heavens today; it is
nestled between my breasts.
Easing into my sternum, Helios
sends out wavy tentacles of sunshine
to every part of my body.
The rays slide and caress
from pulsing concentric circles, and
tickle my collarbone, my hipbone,
and the small of my back.

The sun's red-hot love shines through my irises
to Iraq, to you,
and is returned,
exponentiating with each second. My heart races
no longer for fear, but for
anticipating our spirits' rejoining in
seven more moons.

October

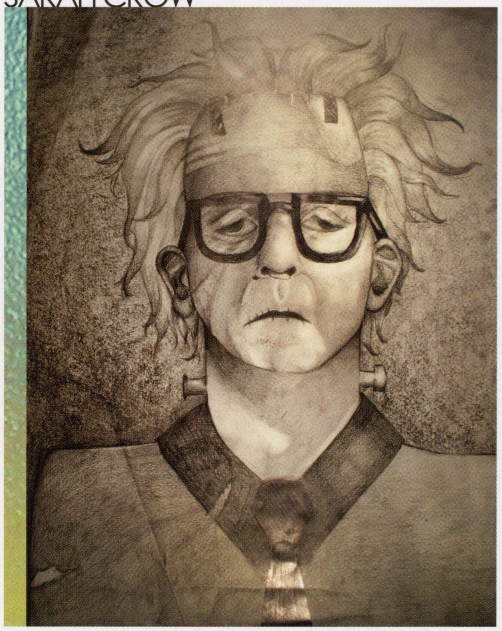
The sand slides beneath my stomping feet.
Each step is a small hill to climb,
each gust of wind a sting.
Though the air is hot, I wish for more clothes
to protect my bare skin from the wind—
Though the sun sets, I wear sunglasses.

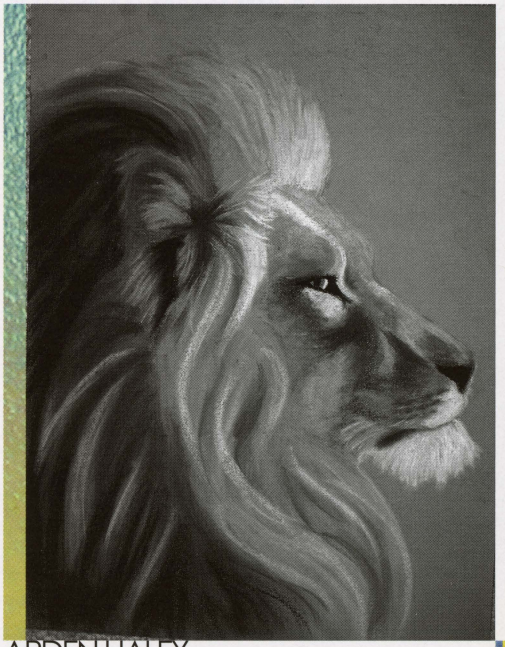
TIFFANY THOMPSON

That's why I am here, after all, climbing these giant dunes.
To see the sun set over the Albermarle Sound is why I endure
    my thighs screaming from lactic acid
        that courses through them like a cheese grater,
    my lungs gasping for air at once burning
        and freezing my trachea from the inside out.
What I thought was one mere dune yields another,
and another,
until I have climbed four huge dunes to look over a fifth
and see God's painting before me.
I have felt despair climbing, but I am here
    of my own free will,
    for my own pleasure,
    for one hour.
All the while, you,
you have been in the landlocked sand dunes
Of your own free will.
For seven months.
Of your own free will you have
    watched every combat brigade leave you behind in Iraq,
    said goodbye to every warrior in your battalion,
    become the sole soldier still fighting a battle already won. You have
    humbled yourself into not acknowledging the grateful tears of
        the oppressed ones you have freed, and
    ignored your countrypeople's and my praises. You have
    silenced your ears
    and petrified your heart
        to my bleeding cries, begging you to return, and you have
    enlisted for three more years into that cloud of sand.

I spent one hour in a safe, sterile version of your world, and it was hell.
Thank you
for showing that the worse option is loving me. ✦

SARAH CROW





ARDEN HALEY

TIFFANY THOMPSON

BORDERS
CORY ZANKER

abbreviations of identity
each internal, prolonged monologue
finds light for just the moment.
i meant to say
i thought i would say
to myself such truth unserved
and the dissonance of death,
undoubted,
unmoved these gears still shift
too suddenly
for temporary traction.
bearing in mind
each word
each picture
poignant, passive property
without grounds for your disposal,
rocking chairs
will accommodate the wind
when you're still standing
bricks will not forget where they were laid
and all the while, just beneath the surface
epiphanic meaning speaks but cannot breathe.

CAROL BANDURA

COLOSSAL SQUID

JASMINE LeMASTER

Ethereal, a floating film
emerging from deep darkness
by a sunken dredge.
Smooth, translucent skin
burning bright red with agitation
gracefully swaying, sinking
with lapping waves against starboard side.
One tentacle wrapped around the main line,
the rest tangled, knotted in the dredge.
Slippery slick liquid
except sharp, hard beak
and bird-like talons on tentacles
to grip and grab and chew on fish
and a pointed head the size of a man.
A dinner plate eye,
brilliant blue iris
met eyes with the captain.
Alive, he noticed,
the first one alive ever seen.
A Sacrifice to Science, he declared:
Immense floating jelly to become
a study
an observation
a dissection.

AMANDA THOMMEN

WORDS UNSAID

JULIANNA SPIER

The score was 24-17.

In a proud voice he said, "the Ravens Raped those Bengals," and they high-fived.

Jane, shifting in her grey speckled chair, couldn't help but purse her lips. He just made a statement without hesitation. He emphasized the letter 'r' and in his mind he was letting the room know that the Ravens demolished in last night's game. In Jane's mind glass shattered. She couldn't help but take longer blinks and allow the images to flow back through her memory, through the rooms of her glass-house mind.

The images flashed quick and bold in her mind, they were images from the past, they were images that for three years she couldn't find. Flashes of bottles, clothes, and curtains stained her mind. Her body lay limp in the chair as her thoughts had lingered out of the room.

Jane was just recently fifteen, a freshman in high school, when she visited her brother in college out in the western side of Massachusetts. The dorms were cramped in her brother's building with dirty clothes filling in the spaces between the aged bedposts and cluttered desks. Scents of pizza and slept-in pajamas covered in Hawaiian breeze welcomed them to his humble abode. Jane threw down her small duffle bag in a corner of the room that seemed slightly more sanitary than the other discolored gaps of floor. She took a seat in the navy blue circular chair next to the door while her brother and his roommate discussed the potential plans for the night.

"Hey guys, remember that guy who sat next to us in bio? Well I promised we'd swing by and bless him with our presence," his roommate said. The arrogance was evident. "I don't know, man," her brother said, "I don't really know him too well. Don't they party hard?"

Jane half-smiled, "guess I'm seeing the real college life tonight, boys." Their vocal hunger drove Jane and the boys to the café to grab some soda and carbs in order to coat their stomachs for the night.

Then, after an hour or so of shoving food into their salivating mouths and returning to the room for some preparatory activities, they headed out. The campus was covered in nightlife with screeching cars and girls and boys with half filled glass bottles. The bass was blasting from windows and students were raging with vivacity. Jane could begin to feel her heart racing with anticipation as she heard the girls squealing and boys schmoozing. The nerves turned her stomach but she blamed it on the vodka.

All of the buildings looked the same with their tarnished red brick and cold sentiment. The February winds were enough to freeze hell's gate and the trio was ready to start some fires. They finally came to Dickinson Hall and Jane took a final pre-game swig from her tinted Nalgene bottle. She stared at the room number for a few minutes while the roommate texted his friend. The door swung open and the chaos poured out of the room, three girls stumbled away carrying the scent of perfume and problems. The roommate led them in.

In her new t-shirt and black stilettos, Jane staggered into the room- uneasy on the heels and tipsy on the alcohol. The long tables were already equipped with open bottles and structured cups similar to the ABC Family specials she watched after school. Her nose filled with the scent of cheap beer that's enough to get a small-built girl tipsy at least. This obviously wasn't the first time this room had been filled with such furnishing and decor. The rugs were stained and the walls had battle wounds.

Jane's hands began to sweat as she saw all the faces of strangers throwing ping-pong balls and pouring drinks. The speakers were blaring but soon became nothing more than background noise.

Her muscles were tense as she continued looking around the room for comfort. Her brother was on the other side of the room laughing with a few other friends. The first guy that looked over at her grabbed a cold can from the fridge and handed it to her. "Frosh?" he asked. "Yup," she smiled with her eyebrows raised, "freshman." He placed his hand on her arm, "relax, it's going to be a good night tonight."

The next few hours were spent being brushed up against by stumbling fools and being handed unquestioned "so-you're-the-new-girl" drinks. Some time later, her brother left with a few guys, and left Jane who said she wanted to stay and live the "college life." He typically didn't leave her out of sight but he didn't feel like arguing this time. The alternative of watching five nerds play Halo wasn't incredibly tempting to her at the time. The rest of the party found a deck of cards and established a round of Kings. Jane used to be the girl who was always intrigued by a new game. She was with one guy that said he'd take care of her. He said he would play the role of her crutch as the night progressed. He grabbed her another drink.

The next few hours slipped beyond her fingertips. They were lucid as a dream with a few images that burst through the chains. Keys, sheets, and hands cloud the blurred and broken memory. But the next morning was clear as glass.

Jane slowly woke up and glared around the unfamiliar room; she felt cold and shattered. The warm sheets were twisted at the bottom of the shifty bed. The curtains were down and the room seemed to get darker with each glance. She unsteadily sat up straight and ran her hands over her trembling limbs and soft skin noticing the small cuts and tender marks. She grasped her arm and shuddered as a chill ran down her. She closed her eyes. Her headache was a mix of dehydration and stress from piecing together splintered scenes from the night before.

JOE L. WROTEN

Like ripped frames from a movie reel the questions repeated "what happened?" Adrenaline pumped down her numb veins as she regained control of her own body but her hands were shaking (and still do from time to time.) Her breath fell short as she saw the bunched up clothes on the ground, a mix of men's shirts and socks covered her shoes and ripped jeans. She'll never know who wore those clothes or where the two owners of the room were that morning. Jane breathed in through her nose the heavy and musky scent of man's brand name cologne. She knew this wasn't a room she wanted to stay in. Immediately, Jane snatched up her beer-stained clothes and quickly covered her shaking and bruised body.

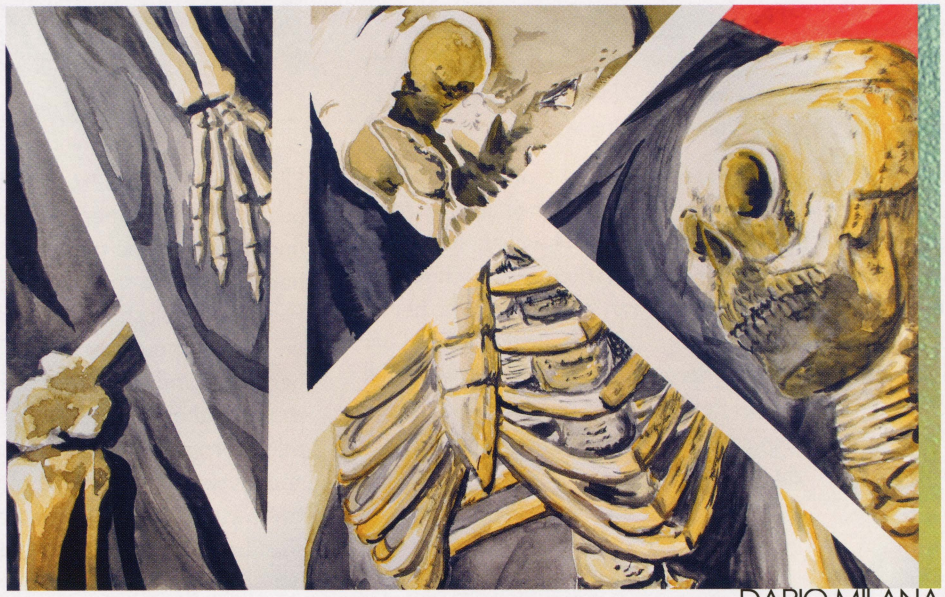
EMILY BOMGARDNER

Without a clear thought, she left the room and found her way back to her brother's dorm. In silence she tried to gather the broken glass memories that led her back and texted her brother: "let's go home." The large campus had never felt so empty. They met up at the café in the center of the campus. Her head was pounding from the alcohol and stress of putting together glass shards of events that hurt to touch. Her brother drove her home and in those two hours she didn't say a word and in these five years no further words have been said about that night to anyone. She had tears. Not the ones you see slowly trickling down a cheek, but behind her eyes. They're the kind of tears that can drown an innocent mind behind those eyes.

They got onto 95. The silence was deafening. The memories rang as loud as gunshots in the back of her mind that raced down her spine with each long breath. In every breath she tries to own those memories and she works to gain strength from owning those words unsaid. She slowly blinked watching the silent cars drive by.

Jane shifted in her grey speckled chair and felt the blank eyes stare.

"Yeah," she exhaled, "looks like the Ravens won." ✦



DARIO MILANA

NICK CROSSEN

חי המדבר
MAURA BERNSTEIN

The desert at night is alive.
The previously stifling sand of the day is transformed,
To cold, swirling drifts of heavy, tan snow but
The fires are still burning,
The people are still singing and
The air is still lit with a calming scent.
The hookah is still smoking from inside a tent but
The previously stationary trees of the day become
Alive, breathing columns of strong brown and
The scene erupts with the crescendo of
A gently vibrating voice singing
The most powerful, sad notes but
The lights go out, the wind is silent, the trees cease when
She stops.

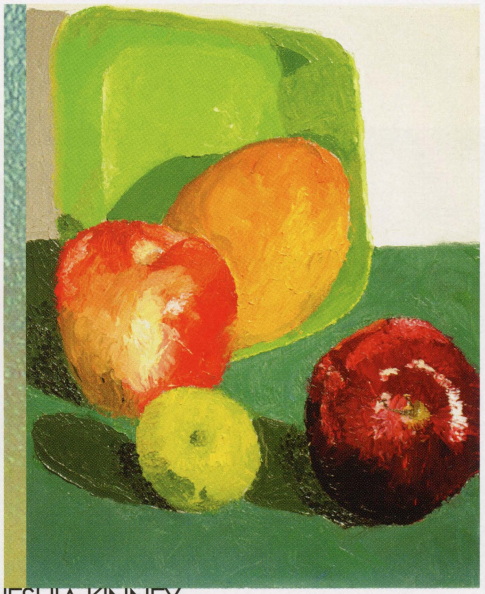
UNTITLED
JASON VAN SLYKE

They're tight and
Heavy as I struggle
To keep them up
and vigilant.

They make the Sun and sky runny.
A morose feeling where I'm not
Numb, just dull.
I stepped through a threshold
But being greeted by air, sweet
air, I drowned again.

No hollow bottles
or child-proof tops
or empty cylinders
because life goes on.

Dedicated to the only woman
Who always listened and
Seldom talked.



IESHIA KINNEY

DAILY CONDENSATION
CORY ZANKER

for a moment
you turn inwards, every footprint, every folded blade of grass and only
slamming doors like snapping fingers, friction fallen forwards
only disengaged, again so thin like paper plates.

while you wait
material motion persists so consistently
two feet tracking splintered stairs, still unaware,
while you bring balance into being these frayed edges
catch the corners.

still prescribing compensation, who feels gravity unhinged?
last year without love,
for years without love
this year with the most simple impulse of perception
one day multiplies
into symbols still worth counting–
constant flux,
the capacity for cohesion.
rotations of the planets, your wheels spin without heat.

CHENELL TURNER

CHRIS SIERADZAN

BLISTERS
ASHLEY FERGUSON

It rained with finality.
The steady pull of gravity
rushed the sweat of countless clouds
toward the earth
that had been screaming for death since May.

Passion overcame atmosphere,
and the searing heat
on sky and soul
was hushed at last.

Morning clay could rest in a silent tomb,
Pain diminishing
and eternity opening.

That was when autumn came.

THE CHOICE TO LOVE

EVANGELINE LANGLEY

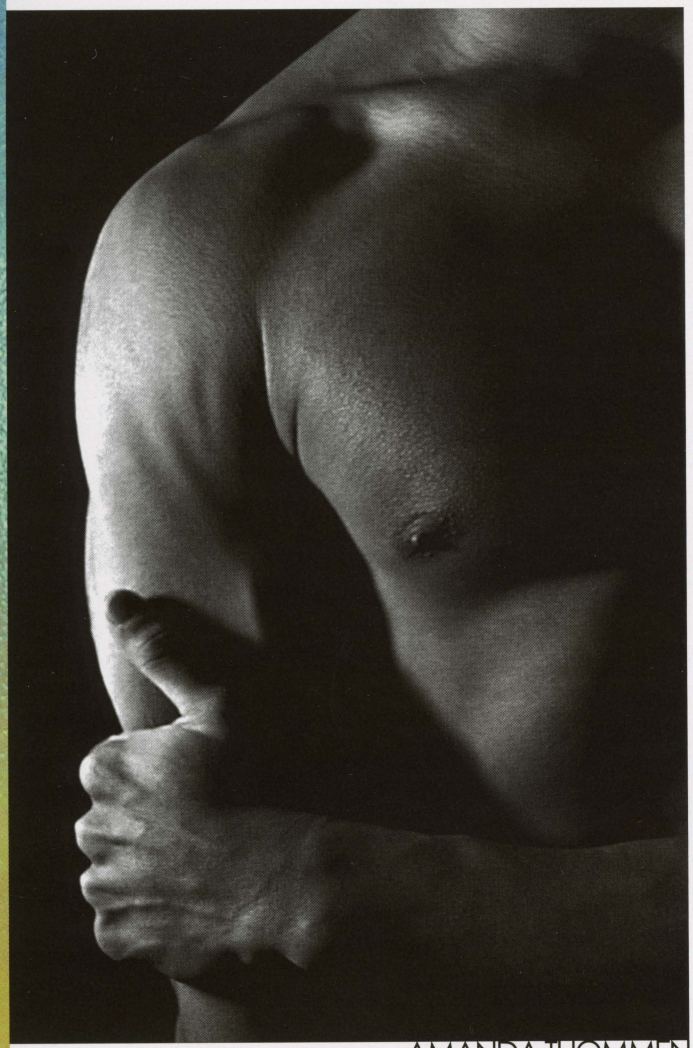
Nobody comes here anymore. There is not a single person to break the lonely existence that I face. Before the people came it was just me in the wild by myself, but then I was found. I became a symbol of hope. I used to be a source of pride. People would come from miles away to view me. They would play in my waters, dance with joy at the mere sight of me. I was the holy idol, the fountain of youth. I was loved and cherished. They built a town around me and kept coming daily to see me. People became my constant companions, as they drove away the animals. Now there is no one, no people and no animals. Nothing is left save the ruins of what once was. The buildings still stand where they once were. The fields where the children once played are overflowing with weeds. The sides of my base where lovers used to flock are now barren and broken. My waters flow no longer, and what once was can no longer be. My spring has died and with it so did the people around me.

What once caused happiness brings only sadness now. I still remember the days long ago back when the town was still being built. The people would come to me and bring offerings to me. They would ask for health, wealth, youth, and love. It was always my pleasure to grant their wish. Until one girl came; she was my secret desire, everything I ever wanted. Blonde angel-kissed hair and eyes glowing a steely blue that would sooner hurt then heal, the perfect match to my golden build and crystal waters. I could deny her nothing, and she soon learned that. She abused what I gave her, asking for whatever came to mind and taking it just as it was granted.

If you knew that she was doing wrong, would you stop her? Or would you join her? Prevent her from doing worse? I did and now I pay the price. She became my master and I owed her my all. I let her corrupt me until I broke so she could enjoy everything.

The final blow came when I forced her love to leave so she could find someone new. When my waters ceased to flow she left, no longer concerned with a fountain with no powers. Left me just like all her other loves, with nothing but the image of her hair flowing as she walked away.

The townspeople never understood why I suddenly stopped, but they became afraid. I was offered more and more to start working again. Women weeping in every color of the earth, bowing at my feet, begging me to start again and help them. But I could never start again. Once I interfered past my allowed powers, I was no longer able to keep any of them. People started dying in the village, no longer able to wish for health or youth. The townspeople left fearing my supposed anger, and the word had spread that my waters no longer flowed. Over 100 years have passed and not one person has come back, not even the animals. My love had driven them away and now I pay for it. The images of weeping women and dying men will forever be ingrained in my memory as I stare out over the empty shell of this town. And yet I can never truly regret what I have done. For just one smile from my golden angel I would have done much worse while wearing a matching smile. The ruins are haunting, but her walking away is worse. ✦



AMANDA THOMMEN

DIVORCE

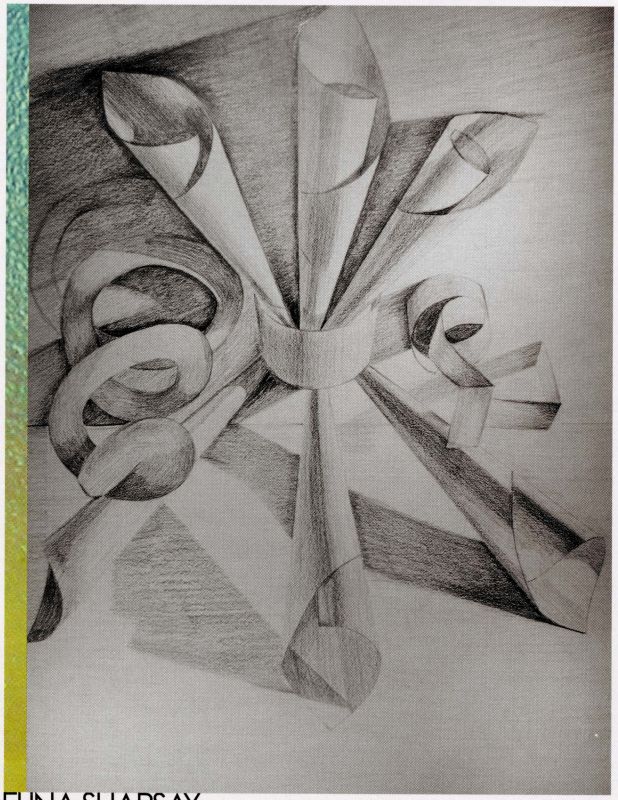
JIM CURRAN

We sang for the end of the debates,
but cellos, gut against gut, gave silence
not Mozart mantras of peace.
Conductors lunged wands of hope;
violins spouted major strains;
timpani heartbeats breathed
recognition that death was just a
dream of conquered ages.
Duprees, Casals, and Mas
stared at Bach portraits for inspiration,
for allegro suites and cantatas.
We saw only china prices and early
withdrawals, lingering letters lapsing
between eventually fading acquaintances,
from family, and barbeque afternoon soirees.
Futures became black and white portraits
of childhood fantasy that moms and dads
would spend eternity in shared crypts that
were fading beneath beds in tattering shoeboxes.
We kept the rings. They lounge waiting
with shattered hope for love songs and
cantatas, warm airs on cellos, warm hosts for
the illusion of eternities.

THE LOGIC OF A TO B

JAZMYN HUNTER

The thoughts are matched with circumstance, sewn together, and then they travel from my mind to my mouth and into the air where they quickly float into the audience's eyes and rest there pulling them wide and rendering my audience speechless. They act like I am crazy, that audience, they don't understand. They are friends and strangers and family and roommates and if they really cared they would take the time to learn the technology of my thoughts. They would study my rules like an engineer studies his maps and building codes. My codes are simple, there are only a few and they are simple:



ELINA SHAPSAY

1. If I say no offense this means you are not allowed to take offense no matter how offensive I am. This is often confusing to some people, but I have no idea why. It is simple.

2. When I am obviously angry and you ask me what is wrong I will tell you that I am tired or nothing is wrong, do not take this seriously. I am most certainly angry with you and, should you fail to appease me, I will become even angrier.

3. If the anger from rule #2 persists I will act in a way that does not please you and is unflattering to me. I will slam doors, I will stomp my feet, and I will not speak to you and you will ask me what is wrong again (please refer to rule #2). This stage of anger will only go away with time and if you respond with anger I will cry and you will be the only one to blame.

4. When something is I see it as is not and when you say something is I will say it is not. You have no authority to determine what is and is not, but I do. I will not tell you that I disagree either, my disagreement will only emerge in the form of statements made to others in whispered tones that are not gossip.

5. #5 is the final and most important rule. If an event occurs I will see it in a way that is uncompromisingly opposite of your view and if your view changes mine will too. I have better eyesight, perception and imagination and that makes me a better viewer, a better interpreter and a much better creator of stories that will be different from yours. No matter how different these stories are I will share mine with others in more whispered tones you know nothing about, but I assure you this is not gossip. ✦

Watercolor on pages 22 and 23 by
CAROLYN BOZMAN

THAT'S GOOD
MAURA BERNSTEIN

So the truth is, I'm really alone. Or at least it feels that way. It feels like every time I want to be glad to be alone, I find myself looking for my phone to call a friend. Every day I wonder about the romantic relationships and friendships I "keep" and how I'm going to manage them all without pissing someone off. Without losing someone. Because it's important for me to feel good. To feel wanted and needed. I can't survive without praise. Without *worship*.

And so I stare at myself in the mirror every morning arranging and painting so that everyone will notice *me*. Want to know *me*.

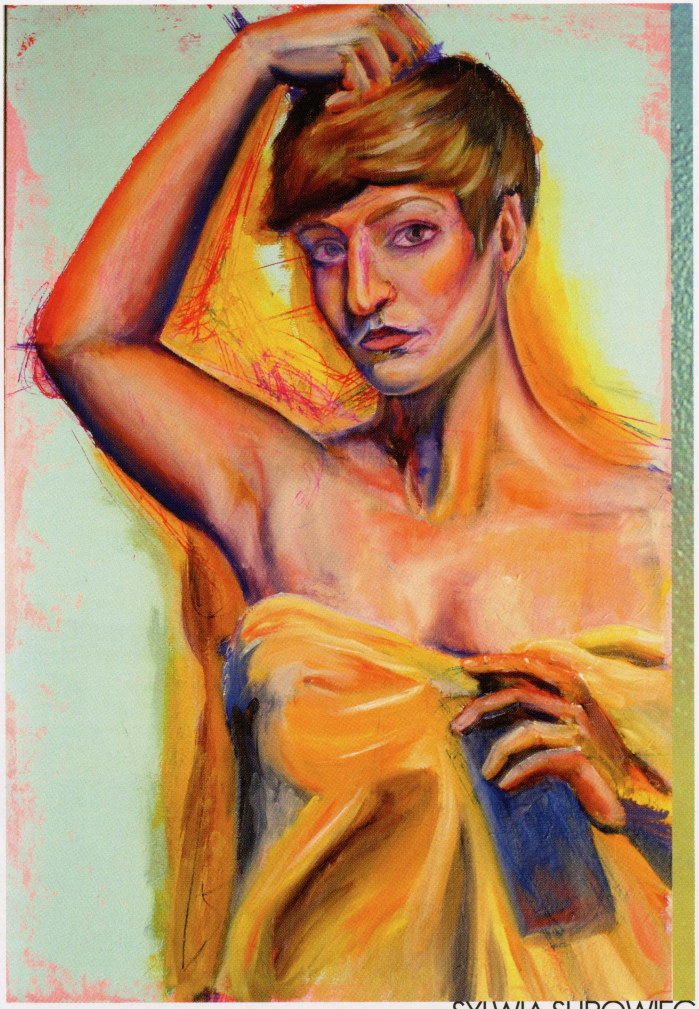
And they do. And I guess that's nice. It certainly makes me smile. Which is good.

But when you *need* that. When you truly need it to justify what you wear, how you appear, what you think, what they think… that gets complicated. It gets messy. I dislike messy.

So I take care not to make waves. And I don't rub anyone the wrong way. I'm… careful. Because relationships are hard and I'll never pretend to be a master. You'll never please everyone. But I fucking *try*.

As a result of my lifestyle, eccentricity and sexual liberation I am somehow limited. Secretly hurt by women who should be my allies. Viewed as an object by men who should be begging me for recognition. When all I want is to exist on my own terms. Be the proverbial master of *my* universe.

But I always persevere. I always paint and arrange. I always get noticed. Which is good. ✦



SYLWIA SUROWIEC

PATRICIA BOZIC

YIELDING

PATRICIA BOZIC

I am forced to bow down to this illness
as if it were a despot,
so powerful is its grip.
Just like that, one fine fall day,
a weeping wind sweeps my locks away.
Like a tree in autumn, I put up a riot,
hanging onto to every last colorful leaf,
before it crumples and falls.

Buffeted by the wind,
I am shaken, stripped to the bare skin.
Though I may yield and my boughs may weaken and sway,
my roots grow deep and my core is strong.
Just try to cut me down.

Do not weep for me, wind—
On a cool current carry my tears to hot sands,
where wisps of hope take root and,
one day, grow into a stand of pines,
their clean, sharp scent saluting the air,
their fronds fanning out,
fine as strands of hair.
Sentinels of faith in the desert.
On this fine fall day,
face tilted upward,
like a sunflower's,
to catch the afternoon glow,
yes, yes, I believe
that I can bend,
without breaking.

PATRICIA BOZIC

THE BOOKSTORE

JIM CURRAN

To perch in a corner
In blissful delight
Staring at metaphor
In forty watt light
Thinking anywhere but this
Just cannot be right
In a bookstore in Yellow Springs
There were worlds we imagined
On a night of espresso
That they brewed for the patrons
Who came every night
All they asked was our silence
All they wanted was reverence
For those who preceded
Who decided to write
So our minds wouldn't tire
Our brain cells would impregnate
The syllables scrambled
Into forests of word
Where the rays of the moon
Became stanzas of sonnets
And the chirps of the crickets
Were soft songs in our souls
But today I arrived
To a sign on the window
Showing one week remained
Till the keys were discarded
And the shades would be drawn
And the shadows would rule
So we all took vacations
To watch the ending of dreams
To hear the clock tick to silence
To watch the words rest in dreams
The winds would soon fade
That blew dreams through our memories
And the blood in our hearts would cake dry
So we all bought a volume
That was signed by the owner
We wept at the click
Of the key in the door
And as we wondered in hope
If the memories would live
The forty watt light just went dark.

KELLI THURMAN

SOLO IN THE SPOTLIGHT
SAMANTHA RODGERS

She stares in the distance with a glamorous glare,
A Vintage Barbie, "Solo in the Spotlight" edition,
Like that of the plastic icon of the 1920's
Complete with infamous microphone

Rich mysterious tresses created by synthetic fibers
Unlike that of the typical blonde
Cover her pale complexion
Finger waved; pulled away from her face

Features hard like plastic
Body frigid, frozen, unmoving
With stark straight arms unable to be bent

Vibrant cherry lips of a vixen
Or Jessica Rabbit
Long lush eyelashes encircling,
And extenuating pale blue topaz eyes

Her white pearls straight from Jackie O's jewelry box
Accentuating her black strapless gown
Bright flash of light from paparazzi
Shining upon rouge tinted cheeks
Annoyed as if a smile would be excruciating

Should I be jealous of such beauty?
No, not of self-inflicted beauty
Beauty so perfect it appears uncomfortable
Her head tilted in disgust of the world
Or enraged at being locked in a box
Maybe I would feel that way too
If I worn tiny plastic shoes

JENNIFER LONGO

HELEN ADAMS
LESLIE GOETSCH

HELEN ADAMS
Homemaker, Collector

Helen Adams passed away
Thursday, September
23 of undetermined causes.

Passed away? It sounds like she just slipped under the door, or something. Like she slid out while we weren't looking, like she…

OK, OK, so what's better? Gone to a better place? Come home to our Lord? Or maybe you'd rather describe what really happened…

No, no, I get your point. It just sounds so… so… inaccurate. Shouldn't an obituary say the truth about a person?

What's that mean? And, anyway, what does the truth have to do with anything? Have you ever read a politician's obit? Or a movie star's? I've written a few and I know that the truth is not part of the process.

Hey, I'm not trying to get philosophical. I just think we should represent her fairly, without telling the whole truth, of course. You know, pay tribute, be real. After all, she was our mother.

That's using the term loosely. Anyway, we're never going to get this done if we're going to argue about how to say she died.

Just say that—she died. Just spit it out—that's how she would have done it. She would have wanted it that way.

Jeez, you're already talking in platitudes. How do you know what she would have wanted? You haven't talked to her in… how many years?

At least I got here in time to see her before she died. Where were you? We didn't have a number, an address, a continent…

It was a last minute thing; how many times do I have to beg your forgiveness? I'm sorry I'm not locked down in my perfect four bedroom track house with a manicured lawn. … God, she doesn't even have to be here for us to feel guilty. Guilt is in the atmosphere.

OK, let's start over.

HELEN ADAMS
Homemaker, Collector
She died Thursday,
September 23.

You know, I'm not really sure collector is very accurate. I mean, there's a lot of stuff she's accumulated, but "collector" implies intent, value. I'm pretty sure a room full of half-burned candles doesn't really count as collecting.

Well, there's also the bottle tops and the newspapers and... the wine corks.

Ah, yes—now that's a real collection. How many plastic bins did you find of those?

I lost count. I just pitched them all, before anyone else found them. That and the empty handles of Old Grouse—why in the world would she keep those?

We're not talking rational here. She once told me that she saved things that had special meaning for her: that holding on to things was how she remembered stuff.

I guess that's why she has pictures of the dogs and not us.

So, how about…

HELEN ADAMS
Homemaker, Unrecovered Alcoholic

She died Thursday, September 23 of undetermined causes.
But we can guess…

Very funny. But, you know, the Homemaker thing implies making a home—all that cozy stuff, like making casseroles and discovering new ways to clean the blinds… Mother was more of a house maker. All her interior decorating—all that surface stuff. When I think of homemaker, I think of Mrs. Gary, wearing an apron, baking cookies, driving her kids to Girl Scouts and field hockey practice.

That would require kids who did Girl Scouts and played field hockey. You have to admit, we were not exactly the Gary girls, either. Remember that time we booby-trapped their porch on prom night, so when their dates came to the front door, a bucket of soapy water dumped all over them?

I still think we should have used a gallon of paint. But we did get the desired result, didn't we? And, if memory serves, it was one of the few times you and I actually were of one mind… At least when we were both still living at home.

You're alluding to the George Orphanos incident, I am guessing. Just get over it. I can't help it if he fell in love with me.

You mean slept with you. I don't think shacking up for one night means someone's in love with you.

OK, whatever. You found your man, anyway. And who would ever guess there'd be a man to find at the dump?

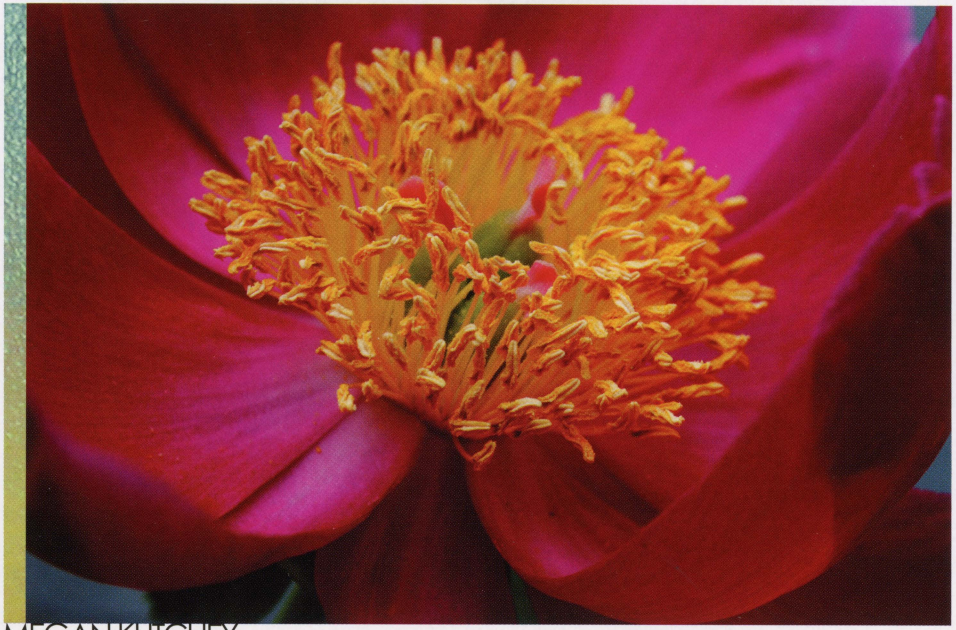
For the last time, we didn't meet at the dump; we went there on our first date. It just so happens that we were both working on projects that involved waste management and…

Speaking of waste management, let's get back to the task at hand. So we're ditching "Collector" and "Homemaker?"

Well, I was also thinking that if we put "HELEN ADAMS" at the top, nobody's going to know who she is, or was, I guess.

You don't mean to suggest that we put what people called her? She hated that.

Well, regardless, everyone who knew her, knew her as Butch. I can't help it if her father wanted a boy. Anyway, what's the use of writing an obituary for someone if nobody knows who died?



MEGAN KUTCHEY

Here, pour me some more wine. What time is it anyway? What else do we have to do… about this?

"This?" Have you got a plane to catch—as usual? We should be thinking about our mother. If we don't give her a decent sending-off, we'll look like the ungrateful children we are… we can't even get the obituary done. And we still have the funeral to plan, the casket to pick out, the caterer, the flowers… I can't be expected to do all this myself. She's your mother, too. I have my own family to take care of, you know.

You mean your cats? And poor old Don? But, listen, why do we need a casket? And a caterer? I thought that…

You thought what? We have to do something with the… well, you know… her body. And we have to feed the poor people who come to the service, if we can ever this obituary written and in the paper…

Well, that's funny. Because when the people called from the funeral home...

Someone called from the funeral home? Where was I? What did they want? What did you say?

Well, since you can't be expected to do everything yourself, I took the call. I think you were busy getting your hair done. Anyway, the word "cremation" came up and I…

Tell me you did not have her cremated. Because you know she had some very specific instructions… about some things. And being left as ashes was not in the instructions.

No, I didn't know. And, really, who is going to know? I'm not sure, but I believe that box that Fed Ex delivered earlier today…

Oh my God! I figured that box was one of those stupid things she always bought from QVC—after she'd had a few. I put it in one of those bags I took to the GoodWill. What the hell are we going to do now?

Hey, I've got an idea. Here's where writing fiction can come in handy.

HELEN ADAMS
RIP

She gave of herself completely,
With good will as her only reward.

She will be remembered with love and
gratitude by her loving daughters.

Where did you put that wine bottle? ✦

LAWRENCE SEAWARD

CORY ZANKER

LILLIAN
SAMANTHA RODGERS

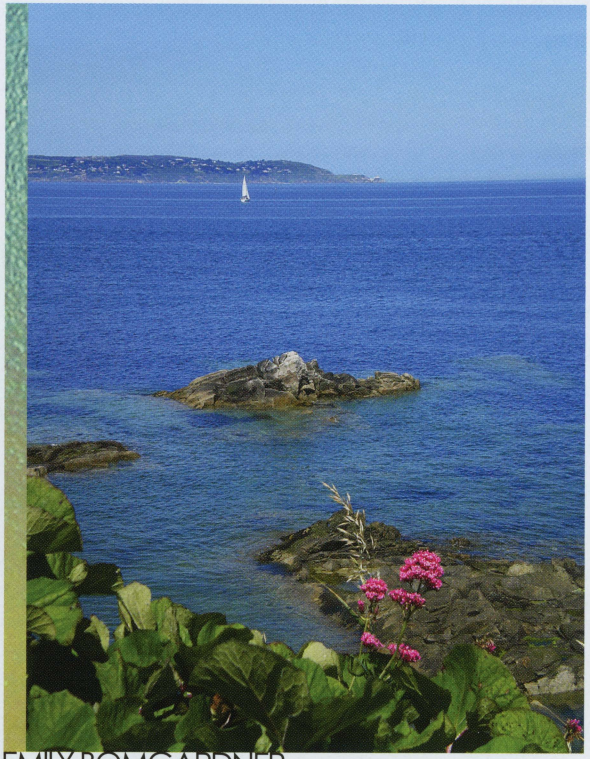
Sun spotted, arthritic hands
The smell of Passion
A fog of aqua net
Cards of black and red
Memories

Life as rich as the sauce she made on Sunday
Teaching without knowing
Growing up
Knowing what home really is
Memories

Jade eyes and diamonds
Childlike laughter
A jewelry box
An angel in glass
Memories

Moving on
A townhouse, then to the grand view
A dwelling by the sea
Now beneath a cold grey stone
Memories

Now I smile when I think of her
Creating a dimple on my left cheek
The one we both share
One of the many things we share
Memories



EMILY BOMGARDNER

SLEEPING IN
CORY ZANKER

discarded plastic bottles scattered on your vinyl seats
half-empty, scarcely opened, they sweat
like crystal glasses, crumpled and contracted
lies the swollen summer sidewalk waiting
for your humble shadow,
begging for the nearby sun.

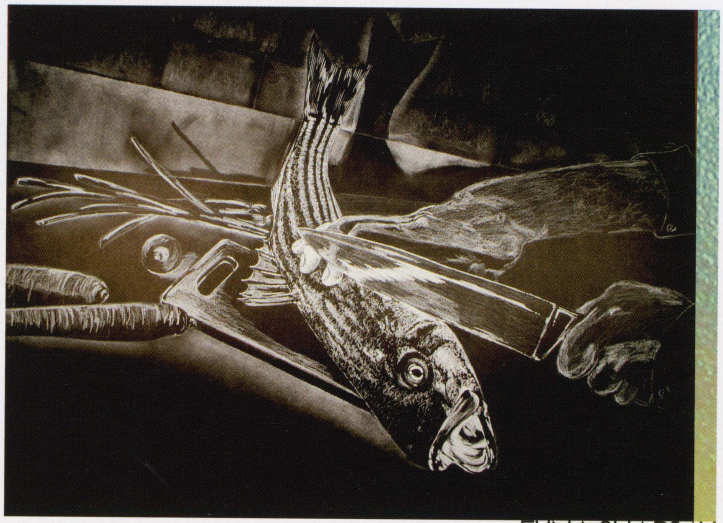
your stained glass eyes have reflected thousands,
upon
thousands
of ageless minds still yearning
for their vision to persist
for their breath to dictate time
for their muddy, misplaced footsteps
to print the plot which never ends,

while only the softest light seeps in

delusional our differences
nostalgic
meltdowns, pensive rusting playgrounds,
we shake trembling hands
which speak less than passing airplanes
and life abroad it beckons
but we're still lost beneath the sheets.

will tomorrow end this quickly?
we're so forgetful when we meet.

CAROL BANDURA



ELINA SHAPSAY

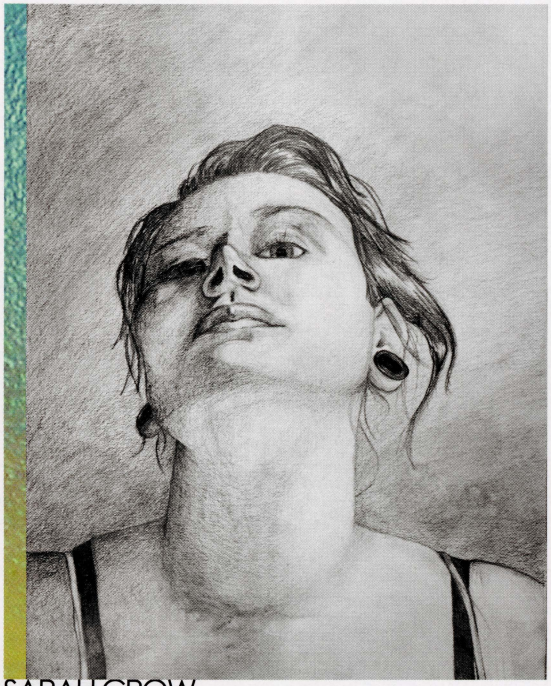
NOTE: Due to limitations of space and budget, Spectrum's editors cannot publish the full text of Alex Taciak's laudable short story "The Music in the Fog." Because we feel strongly about the story's merit, however, we've included the following excerpt of the text and placed the complete manuscript on our website: http://spectrum.suacademics.org

THE MUSIC IN THE FOG

ALEX TACIAK

The fog fills the city with dreams and madness. It hides everything. I don't know what street I'm on. This fog never leaves the city. Since I arrived I have never seen the sun. I keep searching for the Unlucky Tavern on Dresden Street. As I wander, a street sign forms out of the cloud. It says I'm on St. Peter's street. But I disagree; I think I'm on St. George's or even St. Luke's. But it doesn't matter because I know that if I turn here I'll be on Dresden. When I get on Dresden I know I will have to answer the question as to why I'm seeking the Unlucky Tavern. I try to think back to how I got here. I can remember some details, but I am unclear as to my own motives. Even now, I have no idea where this city is. I try to place myself a few days ago. I think I was lying in bed at the inn on Blackcap Street. My mind fades to the scene.

I'm staring at an unfamiliar wood ceiling. Faint piano music from downstairs floats through the floor. My voyage was unsuccessful. I can't go home to my Father's in Massachusetts. I don't know what port I'm in. The maps are of places that I have never heard of. Besides, leaving would require sailing. I don't think I will go sailing ever again. I remember seeing a girl playing the piano downstairs. I felt like talking to her but I also felt it wasn't worth it. So I asked if I could have a room for the night. Even though I'm tired I can't sleep. I'm too tired to sleep. I'm not going to sea ever again. What should I do now? When I was at sea there was always a job to be done. Now there are no jobs. Now there is nothing. If I went downstairs I would not be doing anything. But I'm too tired to sleep. I want to sleep.



SARAH CROW

GONE
SAMANTHA RODGERS

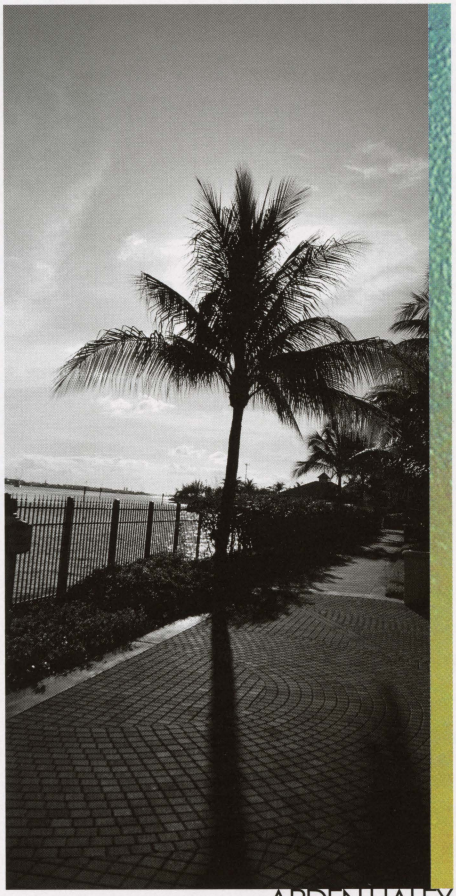
The smooth wood glistens in the lowly lit room
Frank Sinatra plays delicately
I did it my way
Old and tattered carpet
Antique floral wallpaper
Very dated

Photographs arranged
Weddings, vacations, five small children
Matured and grown now
Black and white memories
A man in uniform
A young couple madly in love

Chatter echoes
Tissues pass around, a necessity
This was not a Sunday dinner
Do they not see what I see?

Lonely I sit
My head hung low
I glance in the wooden box
A face caked with makeup
I kneel near

Gazing into the white lined box
Frozen as time stops
My heart vacant
He is gone



ARDEN HALEY

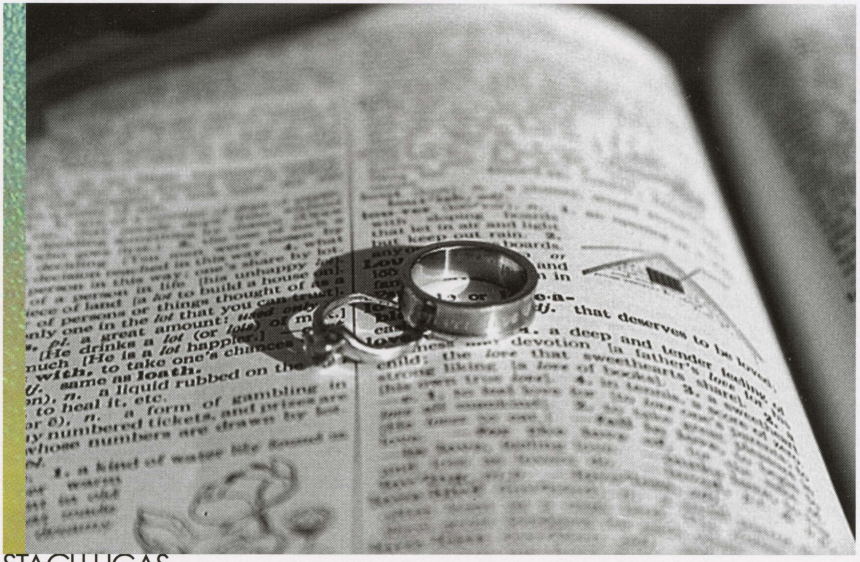
IN MY ROOM
JIM CURRAN

In my room, I watch paint dry,
Quiet whisper, noise exercise
Its imagination, screaming
In sign language at children
Wondering outside my door
Waiting for odors of recognition,
Jasmine tea, perspiration,
Caustic peppermint language,
Phrases of the ancients,
Whisperings of rebirth,
Love songs of the lonely.
When the sun penetrates
Scrims, squirrels stare from
Branches; they see only
Turin shrouds, faint beliefs
Of coffee and inspiration
Quills scribbling new injustices
To truth, to latent beliefs that
Turning our backs to the sun
Allows the west early glimpses
Of dawn, of creation, of Eve's
Desires. They will never imagine
That in evening's haunting shadows,
When my candle rivals sunlight,
I carry silent wishes to know behind
Which color eyes my madness lives.

OCEANIC NIGHT
ASHLEY FERGUSON

It surpassed everything that evening,
The rise and fall of the fading sun
On the water's coursing, fraying edge.
The shoreline was held forever distant,
Though our capsule seemed to yearn
For the touch of its rocky base.
Sails splayed out against the wind,
Pushing us forward as light faded
And the orb of moon rose high
Above the trees and petty stars,
Our vessel's pounding body
Smacked at the rough, cruel stone
The sea had become beneath us.
Beautiful was the oncoming darkness
Which held a sense of lush pride
At making our persistent way
On such stormy breaks of night.

CORY ZANKER



STACI LUCAS

THE NOMAD
NICK RING

I. Poverty

He had walked for a week, without aim, without eating or sleeping, through alleyways from town to city, valley, mountain and back down. Now he finds himself in a dark and peaceful park. Here, finally he decides to rest against a tree. But first he meditates at the root in a half Lotus position, a blue, blue Lotus. He guides himself through true and false memories to the quietest place.

A voice seems to scream, "You can't sleep here!" A little blue man appears in a little blue cap, tapping his foot as the bearded nomad opens his eyes, empty and awake, having just returned from nowhere.

"Ok."

"The park is closed. It's after dusk. Go on."

"Ok… Why can't I sleep here?"

"The park is closed. It's illegal to be here at all."

"That's strange."

"How so? You don't own the tree, do you?"

"No. Do you?"

The little man takes off his little blue cap, and, mussing his hair around, asks, "Do you own this land?"

"Do you own this land?"

"Don't mock me!"

"Don't mock me."

"I'm being serious. Do you own this land?"

The wanderer stands and glances to the sky, "No one owns this land."

"Wrong answer, the City owns it," says the reddening, little blue man, taking a step closer.

"The City does not own anything besides its buildings and roads and that bench right there. I thought it would be illegal to sleep on, so I didn't."

"It is illegal to sleep here, there or anywhere that's not your own private property."

"But I've nothing. Where do I sleep?"

"At a shelter or in jail, not here, get out of here, bum."

"… But I like it–"

"I was trying to be a nice guy! But I have a quota to fill. You have the right to remain silent…" On and on goes the little blue man in his little blue cap, claiming something else that wasn't his or anyone else's. He says that the homeless man was not cooperating, though the homeless man was certain he had.

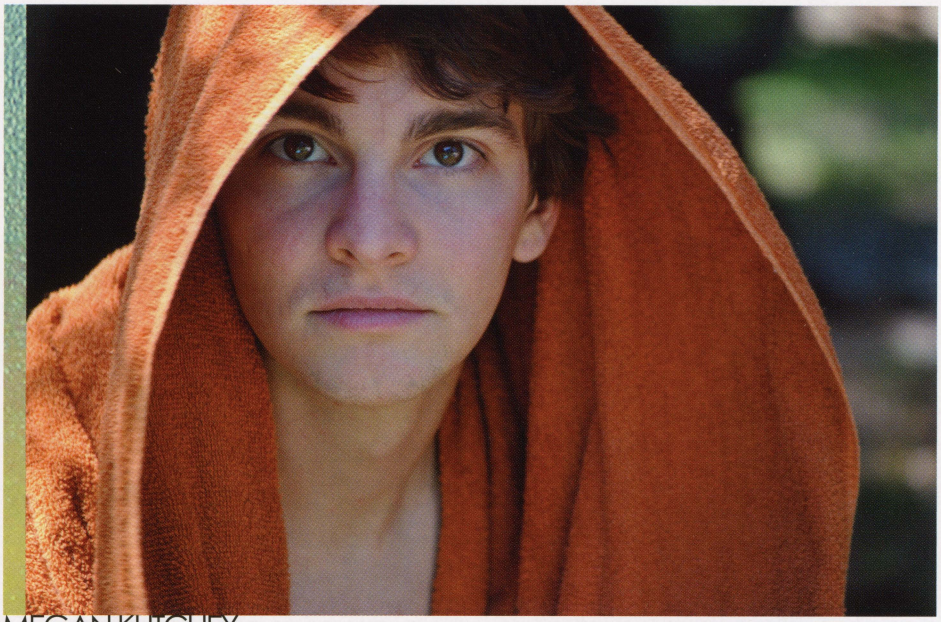
"I have the right to remain silent," he thinks over in circles, trying to meditate like before, but can't until he circles his mind enough times to realize that he should take advantage of this right. The thought frees him from the cycle, and once again he can focus on nothing until the sun rises. He is a man in a cell who left everything somewhere, sitting, meditating until the morning rays hit his eyes through the window. He thinks it won't be long until he'll be let out, after all he was only "trying to sleep" and it is a new day. No need for sleep now. He begins circle walking, looking into and through the imaginary center, reviewing his vows: poverty, fasting, silence.

Soon enough, a little blue man comes to open his cell. He cannot tell whether or not this is the same man.

In the warm early sunlight, he remembers the story of the Buddha, how many times he had heard it. Passing over a bridge, he watches the water's perfect movement, looking as sacred as the Ganges. He wants what Buddha found, nothing, and to become something new, to be one with all, to be truly awake.

II. Silence

After taking in a fleeting day of his limited freedoms, the wanderer finds himself in an alley at dusk, at the end of the



MEGAN KUTCHEY

golden hour. He steps quickly passed the reek of a dumpster, gagging then breathing through his shirt.

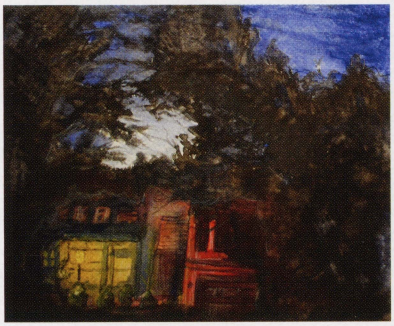
A graying man at least twice his age smoking a cigarette sees, and as if there had been trouble between them before, the man yells from a restaurant front, "Don't you scare my customers away!"

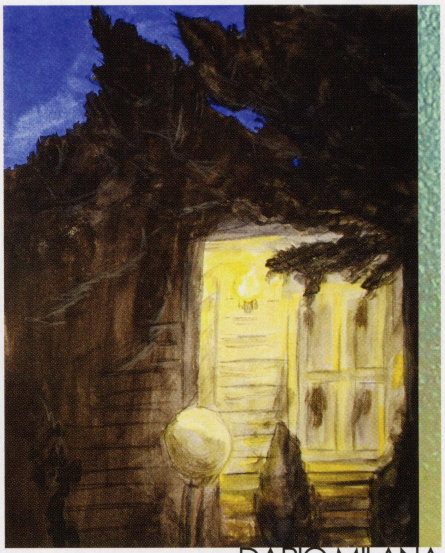
The Buddhist stops to see who he is shouting at. Looking around, he decides the culprit is out of view, and smiles, waiting to hear the rest of the human drama. "You!" the older man says, this time pointing through a cloud of smoke. The smile fades and the nomad is shocked to see this man from the restaurant so angry at him so suddenly. "Get your ass away from my restaurant, you filthy piece of garbage."

The Buddhist thinks and cannot remember a time when anyone has ever used such harsh words against him. Can he or anyone else really be considered so expendable, so disposable to be tossed aside as in a trash can for the man on the City truck to grab from the curb and chuck? He is comforted when he remembers his personal silence. The nomad is saved, removed from the temptation to externalize any negativity. The smile returns to his face, and beginning to walk again, he waves to the man. The thought of blowing a kiss crosses his mind, though the graying, smoking man might take it as mockery. The wanderer breathes heavy, almost laughing a big Buddha laugh.

Halfway down the alley, there is an Indian boy watching, also smoking a cigarette. As the confrontation ends, and he is being approached, the boy sets his cigarette down on a box and runs inside. Just before the Buddhist passes, the boy returns, revealing a biscuit from the pocket of his apron.

With a refreshing accent, the boy says, "I saw the whole thing. I was as confused as you." He offers the bread, receiving only a shake of the head and a smile in response. The boy picks up his cigarette, "You know you are not garbage… makes you wiser than most, not believing everything you hear," he says with a laugh. The Bhikku nods and smiles, and again the boy holds out the bread. "Please take it. If you're not hungry now, you will be soon… There you go." They both nod. Noticing that the man from the alley has not spoken, the Indian boy





DARIO MILANA

says, "The less you say, the less likely you are to offend or sound stupid. You are very bright for this, although it becomes difficult with others involved." He takes two drags from his cigarette and goes to put it out. "It is so hard to be hopeful in a world like this where the people are one to two, good to bad, respectively and disrespectfully. Anyways, I've got to go back to work. Namaste and travel well." The Bhikku smiles and bows to the boy as the last light of day turns to twilight.

During the day, the wanderer spends most of his time head to the sky, but in a City at night, there is a false glow of light that casts a halo through which no stars can be seen. Sometimes he wonders whether or not they are there at all until he remembers sleeping on the mountain where everything is alive and takes turns watching the earth and the sky, guarding their own part and singing about it all. The stars really shine out there. They don't like the competition in the City. Because he cannot see the stars, he notices how much trash is lying in the streets, in the grass, in the trees, in the sewers and streams on its way to the seas then into the air. It makes him sick seeing it and thinking about breathing it and thinking about the health of Mother Nature.

He picks up trash as he passes. This night he walks toward the brightest light in the brightest part of the City, surprising to him, a small restaurant where people drive their cars along the outside to order and pick up food. The red and yellow signs stand taller than any and all nearby trees, glowing darkly.

A screeching howl like a thousand owls dying cuts through his thoughts, causing him to shudder. An unreasonably sized car spitting fumes tears into the parking lot with windows down and three rowdy young men shouting and roaring with laughter. As they move from the car to the restaurant, the Buddhist wonders why they would eat in the middle of the night. They act stupidly yet seem happy about it, spitting and smoking as they amble inside. They are so active, he can feel and almost hear them through the walls and windows.

He turns his attention to the Earth again, noticing garbage in the careful garden outside of the restaurant. He begins to collect straws, sauce packets, napkins, and cups in a paper bag, all with the same logo, red and yellow, from the glowing sign. The young men notice him outside and decide to eat their food at a table out there.

"I did not see him on our way in."

"Me either. I bet we could have some fun with him." The third young man is silent.

"Let's sit over here." They settle at the closest table to where the wanderer is.

"Oh man I've never wanted a burger more in my life!"

"I know right!" They laugh in an uproar, looking over at the homeless man who pays them no mind. One of the three goes back inside after he finishes eating. The other two whisper for a moment and walk toward the Bhikku.

"Hey!" says one of them loudly.

"Hey, hobo!" says the other even louder. "I'm talking to you!"

The homeless man turns to them, holding bags of garbage.

"What are you doing?"

"Aren't you gonna answer, huh? It's only polite."

"What are you doing, picking up trash? What are you doing?"

Up close they look red in the face, their blue eyes glazed like shining glass, shining red and white. Up close they behave feverishly, seeming half sickly, smelling of food and alcohol. Tossing down a wrapper, one of the young men starts laughing, "Oh no, I'm so sorry." The other joins in, dropping a handful of unused napkins. Immediately, the nomad bends down to add them to his bags. Both young men drop their trays on the ground, "Ain't you gonna say anything?" He picks up their trays. They knock everything out of his hands, still speaking as though they are not doing what they're doing. The homeless man stops listening to their words and picks up all the trash all over again. They watch as he collects and gets back to his feet. One of them throws their cup in his face, making his beard drip with the sticky, wet, sugary drink. The Bhikku breathes out shocked with ice, and a few drops of liquid spit the young men in the face accidentally. In a second, he is grounded on hands and knees.

"What the hell is going on? You guys wanna get the cops called?" says the third returning quickly from inside the restaurant. "Jesus, let's go. The girls just got to the house."

While on the ground, the wanderer is pushed by the soul of a foot, rolling onto a collage of his carefully gathered garbage. He coughs loudly, regaining the wind that got knocked out of him. Lying in the grass, beside his head, he sees a half-eaten burger, dirty and smashed from underfoot. "Such a shame," he says without thinking in one heavy breath.

III. Man

The Bhikku retreats from the City, moving to the outskirts to get away from man and his trash. He wanders toward the coast, wanting to see the ocean before meandering the long way to the next one. For a while he follows a power line field, wondering where the power comes from and where it goes, knowing that power flows from every point moving in all directions despite the wires. By sun down, he approaches a great white bridge rusting red, brown and orange on its underside. Clouds hang motionless above the several hundred foot high top of the bridge. The wind does not blow and the weather is cool, almost absent. The next City lies off in the distance twinkling so much with so little reason to do so.

"Excuse me," says a hunched man with a walking stick to keep him standing, appearing at the wanderer's side. He looks older than any man on the face of the Earth with a perfectly white beard and long white hair, a nightly apparition of human imagery. "Excuse me," the old man says again, "Were you going down this path also?"

"I don't know. What's down there?

"Other tramps like you and I," the old man replies waving his hand for the other to follow. Slowly they walk down the hillside between grasses as tall as their hair, winding underneath the bridge to a place that can't be seen from the road. Under cover of the bridge, where it leaves the Earth, is a camp. "Welcome, welcome," the old man says turning around, smiling and motioning his hand again. "My name is Cyrus," shaking hands with the newcomer.

"Everybody else calls him Father Time," says another man coming out of a makeshift tent. "You can call me Wallace. Welcome, my friend." Wallace is a black man wearing sun-

glasses. "You've come on a meaningful evening. One of us has passed away… a man named Casper who stayed in our camp for the last few years."

"I'm sad to hear that."

"Yes, well we're glad to have you on such a memorable occasion. Our ceremony will begin soon."

Wallace turns back into his tent, and Father Time takes the Buddhist to meet the last man living in their midst. Random household appliances sit around on the dirt and gravelly grass, waiting as if there is milk to be kept cold, shirts to be ironed, and dishes to run. In a dark, wet corner of the under bridge, another tent-like structure of brown cardboard sat, leaning hard to one side. "Hey Sam! Come out. There's someone I'd like you to meet." There is not a sound from within. They move closer to the opening, and Father Time loudly says again, "Hey Sam!"

He is interrupted by Sam yelling, "Oh yeah? Bring 'em in here." He is nowhere to be seen from the doorway. Slumped in the near left corner of the sullen, littered hut, Sam stares at the two men in the opening for a long while. "Come on, Sam. Let's get down to the water." Father Time slowly helps Sam, a plain looking brown haired, brown eyed man, the youngest yet, to his feet, fumbling repeatedly as the curious Bhikku watches them share the same cane.

Blue boulders line the coast of the brown, night river, and the three men with torches lit slowly make their way around the rocks to a small cliff. Wallace, with a cane in one hand and torch in the other, has already made his way further below to a slim, sandy beach that barely hangs onto the waterside where Casper's body lies on a raft. The Buddhist, Father Time, and Sam sit on a rock, looking down at the dead man.

Wallace begins to speak carefully, allowing the words to be heard, "I'll begin... Dear Casper, dear friends, mitakuye oyasin. To all four winds and the one from within, Namaste. As-Salamu Alaykum. With ci bei, fu and lu, superperfundo on the early eve of your day. Amen and Shalom." Wallace motions upward with his orange torch.

"Goodbye Casper, you were a friendly guy, and… now you are a friendly ghost. It was sure nice knowing you," calls Father Time from above. Sam brings his head up, looks around bobbling then continues to sit with his head hanging loosely.

"Hello and goodbye Casper. I wish I could have met you," says the wanderer, not feeling as out of place as he thought he would. Though to his surprise, Wallace uses his cane to find his way to the grass made raft, pushing it away, out into the water, after setting fire to it with his torch.

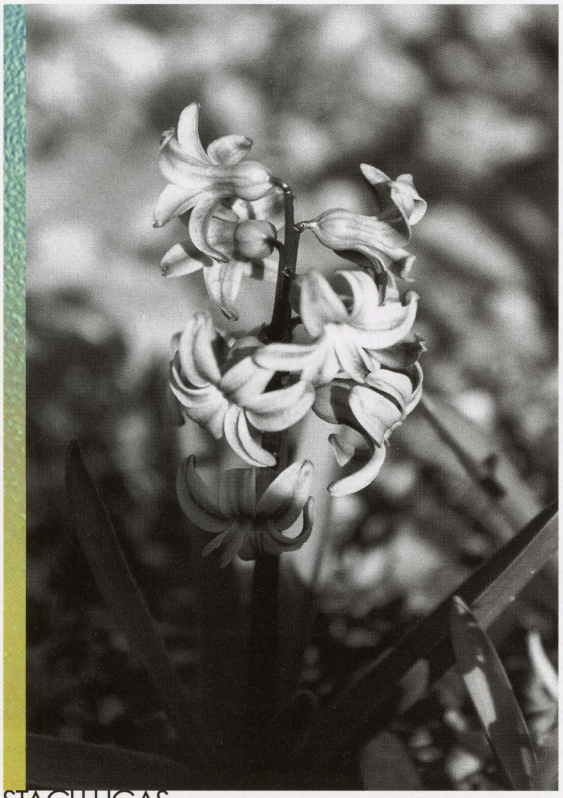
Wallace begins singing, "My sweet lord, my sweet lord, I really wanna know you. I really wanna go with you. I really wanna know you lord, but it takes so long. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hare Krishna! Hare Rama..." The song lasts for a few minutes as the raft distances from the group of torches and men on the side of the river, reflecting the stars of a more spacious night sky, the clouds still still. A city twinkles miles away, beyond the bridge that stands overhead. Wallace asks to initiate a moment of silence for Casper.

Later the four men sit around a fire, after Father Time and Wallace convince the Buddhist to eat at least a little. "Casper was a one of a kind. I'll tell you. I met him more than once in this state over the years. He was always silent. That's why I call him Casper. He could sneak up on you like a ghost, but he was friendly. So I called him Casper. Sometimes I thought he just chose not to talk. I never learned a thing about his history and tend to think he lived here most of his life, though on some nights, like full moons or... blue moons or something, I could swear I'd hear him or somebody down by the rocks playing a violin with such emotion. It was a beautiful scene- a silent man pouring his heart out in song over a river. He must have had some training to learn to play like that. Either that or he sold his soul to the devil."

Father Time is interrupted by Wallace laughing, "Like Paganini or Robert Johnson or Bob Dylan. I don't quite think the devil was anyone Casper would associate with… much less speak to!" Wallace cracks himself up.

Father Time joins in laughing. The nomad begins to tell

them about his vows and his travels. They listen intently to what he says. Wallace shares with him that members of many other religions used to take on similar challenges, though not so often anymore or in isolated groups. He says he was a university religion and philosophy professor at one time. He begins to relate a story, "A student of mine told me about this reoccurring dream he would have. In it, he was always homeless, and he would always be awakened from sleep, slowly chasing after a long shadow cast by streetlamps and an evading body. He would follow the shadow around a few corners until he passed under a bridge. Beyond the bridge, he approached a woman who did not say, but he knew her name was Desire. Her hair was wild and orange as the fire before us. Desire looked homeless, but young and gorgeous, thriving in her freedom. And every time he had the dream, she would be standing in front of a fountain cascading water, shining in the street light behind her, still casting that long shadow. He would find himself standing close enough to touch her, sometimes kiss her, when he would wake up. Every time the dream ended before they spoke or embraced. Sometimes, looking deep into Desire's eyes, he would feel as though she wanted him to spend his life with her. He asked me what it all meant, so I told him to make a decision. Like you," says Wallace looking at the wanderer, "the student was into Buddhism. I told him a true Buddhist would walk away but that it was his dream to decide, and only just a dream."



STACI LUCAS

The Bhikku opens his mouth to speak when, after a slug from his bottle, Sam slurs, "You two should stop before this guy wants to leave mankind all together." He laughs and begins the unsteady way to his feet, "like I want to half the time." The thought of leaving mankind has never crossed the nomad's mind and becomes somewhat of a distraction.

"Just because you want to leave mankind doesn't mean that we caused it. It's your fault," Father Time says, frowning through his beard, not looking up.

Sam is standing now, waving the green glass bottle around, shining in the fire light, "A great writer is destined for madness… People told me I was sick for years, drinking too much. I wasn't sick then. I'm a sick man now. My only desire is the drink that drinks me dry. And getting older, it's humiliating." Sam's eyes fall on Father Time, "It's like… equivalent to… if the humor of a joke was replaced with melancholy and lament." He begins walking away to his hut, pouring the bottle on the ground and growing louder as he goes. "It's a soul sickness now; the venom is the remedy. And now that I have nothing, this is no longer bittersweet, just bitter till the drink bites, eats and, the crumbs, the dust, settles."

The three men remaining look around as the fire crackles. "Getting old isn't so bad as he says," utters Father Time quietly, catching the wanderer's eye. "One good thing is, my bones tell me most of what I need to know these days- when it's gonna just rain instead of storm, when there's trouble, that sort of thing. I've learned the way things go by now, the patterns, and I've accepted them. You know, I stopped counting my age a long time ago. Why does it matter? There's life and there's death. I'm one or the other. It's more than just num-

bers. Although the professor did tell me about this one Chinese man who debatably lived 256 years. Now that's old but I prefer the mystery. I know I'm getting older. Each day becomes an accomplishment."

Wallace mentions, "He's right, a Taoist sage named Li Ching Yuen lived to 256 years, surviving on an herbal diet, daily walking and meditation. Taoism, if you don't know, came out of Buddhist influence in China. The way you speak and especially your vow to pick up trash, that close association to nature seems to remind me of Taoism."

Father Time nods in agreement. "Well boys, getting old may not be so bad, but it sure is tiring. I'm off. Goodnight." The Buddhist and Wallace say goodnight as Father Time walks off to sleep.

The fire begins to smolder, making its way down to darkly glowing embers. "I would like to show you this ancient Chinese emperor's charm," states Wallace, reaching into the collar of his shirt, pulling out a simple string necklace with a brownish metal coin hanging from it. "This was a gift from a friend almost a decade ago. Look at the images." Wallace passes it to the nomad who inspects it from front to back. "Below the square hole is an ox, to the left of the hole is a lamb, and to the right is a horse: three animals each with a different job or ability. The fourth animal is man, a Buddhist monk meditating upon a throne of lotus above the hole of the charm. To the monk's right is a tree, the Bodhi tree, where Buddha found enlightenment. To the monk's left is a cloud, what is called the auspicious cloud, representing the heavens and good luck. I never put this old charm to use until I lost my house and my job. I swear it works, and it's how I met Father Time. Then he brought me to Casper's camp... I feel safe enough here… I want you to have it," says Wallace. The Bhikku barely heard the words through his focus on the brown coin in the soft glow of fire light. "I mean it. I'd rather have somebody who actually calls himself a Buddhist to have it."

"Thank you… I cannot thank you enough. I will travel with it always," the wanderer exclaims, surprised and excited. His gaze stayed on the charm for a while. Wallace makes a move to stand, saying goodnight as he moves.

"Goodnight… I don't know if I will be here when you wake up."

"Then travel well fair Buddhist. Super perfundo, Shalom, be safe," Wallace says with a smile before turning into his tent.

Sitting in front of the fire, the nomad sits, staring into and through the charm until the fire dies and the embers are blackened. After taking in a few quiet moments of this night, he positions himself for meditation, waiting for the sunrise above the water, and facing that way.

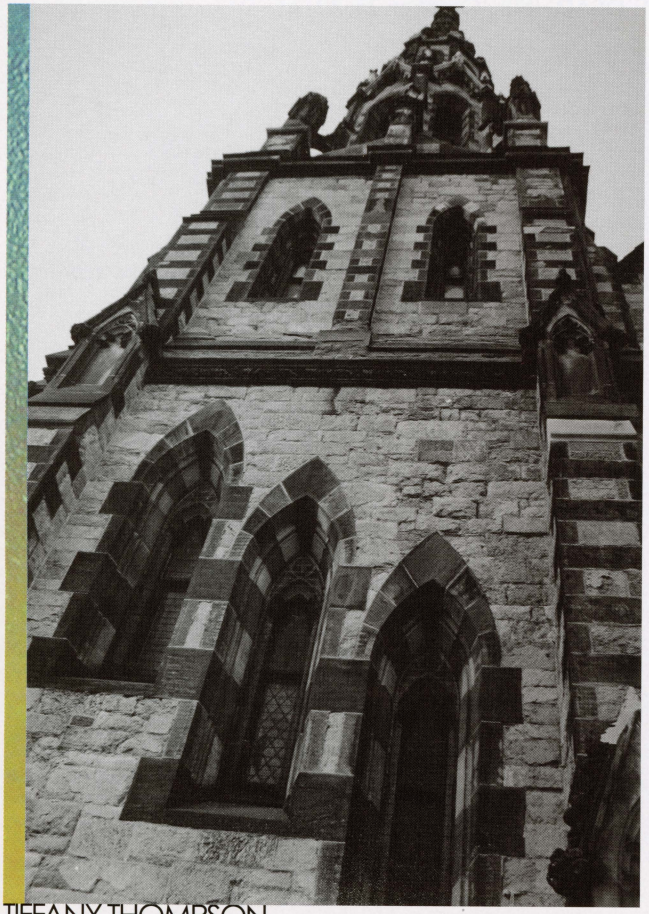
As the first loom of the sun blesses the Earth with soft, even light, he wanders down the dewy rocks to the river, remembering the ceremony the night before. He finds his way to that tiny beach. Looking up at the cliffs, he remembers himself standing beside Father Time and Sam: a Bhikku, a sick man, an old man, a dead man. Sam's words echoed in his head, "Leave mankind all together…" Looking down into the water, the nomad sees his own reflection, rippling, hardly hanging on to his body as if he was going to transform right then, or his soul flee. Hanging from his neck is the charm, showing on the water Buddha's image with his own.

He crosses the rusting white bridge over the river reflecting the rising sun as the colors of the world wake for day. Off in the distance a black pillar of smoke coming out

of a towering chimney climbs the sky.

IV. Self

A dump of forgotten commercialism and leftover everythings cannot be imagined as just one of many the world over. On a horizon of the human mess, the Bhikku wonders, "how far down is the dirt?" He longs for death in this moment, to become the source and sustenance of life, the soil. The heavens remind him that Earth is just one of uncountable planets, left alone to have life survive, but why? He is captured and summoned by the reddening, setting sun in a golden haze of this numbing man-made spectacle, summoned to the edge in a curious shuffle.



TIFFANY THOMPSON

With his head low, his eyes find on his left side a torn and faded magazine. With lips pursed and curves unreal, three women lying nude, sprawl across each other, staring up at him with seducing eyes. The wanderer walks on, passing a shining Time magazine, covered by a hundred bombs dropping through the clouds. Miles above his head, a jet plane darts with a deafening shriek; not a muscle moves. In despair, he weeps with the Earth for the loss of itself, for he alone cannot help her. He is one man and weak. He took nothing from her. He stayed silent for her. He left his kind for her, and he left himself for her. Walking on until there seemed no point, no closer to the horizon, he sinks to his knees on the trash. Before him in the mess, his own image appears, tears and all, but broken into pieces as the glass displaying the face. When for a moment he is at a loss for meaning, for the meaning of being, he sees a beaming reflection that blinds his eye. And with this calling, the sky responds in tears, pouring down pure life. His body becomes soaked to the bone as he steps to the gold light, and his beard drips with the natural shower, a bath for the soul. A calm power becomes him, seeking to forgive himself for wanting to die. What an unthinkable crime! Music is the air with a rainy rhythm, and from the nomad's brow chakra, a faint rainbow, a full spectrum of colors, runs up the falling drops toward the red sun.

Before the homeless man stands a vibrantly illustrated globe, undamaged and shining. Violet, yellow, red, brown, green and blue, "this dripping image of the Earth is perfect," he thinks. It speaks more clearly to him than anything ever has, saying, "The world will make us clean." One man can only do what he can before he can't, and then gone forever, one is made into a part- broken, stuck onto what he helped create. The Bhikku closes his eyes, sending and receiving, heaving the vibe of living and nonliving as if through osmosis, to accept all things without question, only curiosity and awe. He waits, meditating in the rain, blossoming as a blue, blue Lotus out of the layer of human refuse above the Earth. ✦

The Stevenson University Spectrum Literary and Fine Arts Magazine is published during the spring semester. Here are the guidelines for submissions for the Spring 2012 issue.

LITERARY

1. Essays, fiction, drama, and poetry are accepted for consideration for publication. Please limit prose to no more than *five double-spaced pages*.
2. Submissions of original, unpublished work from SU students, alumni, faculty, and staff are welcome.
3. Each entry must be submitted electronically as an e-mail or e-mail attachment. All submissions should be accompanied by the contributor's name, e-mail address, year in school, major, and permission to publish in *Spectrum*.
4. NO NAME should appear on any page of the manuscript.
5. A panel of students will judge all submissions anonymously.
6. Copyrights for work published in *Spectrum* will revert to the individual authors. (See Aaron Chandler, Advisor).
7. Send submissions by e-mail to:
   Aaron Chandler, Assistant Professor of English,
   Spectrum Advisor
   achandler@stevenson.edu
8. DEADLINE: October 25, 2011.

ART

1. Two-dimensional artwork includes paintings, prints (such as collographs, woodcuts, linoleum cuts, silkscreened work, and more), drawings, photographs, and collages.
2. Three-dimensional artwork includes sculptures or relief sculptures in any medium. Unfortunately, we cannot accept 3-D artwork too large to fit on a tabletop.
3. Electronic artwork includes computer-generated artwork created in software programs such as Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop.
   - ▲ Artwork created in raster-based software such as Photoshop should have a minimum DPI (dots-per-inch) of 300.
4. Visual artwork for publication in *Spectrum* must be submitted by the end of the fall semester.
   - ▲ 2-D and 3-D Artwork can be delivered to Amanda Hostalka, Professor of Art by the end of the fall semester. Please put your full name, phone number, and e-mail address on the back of each piece or bottom of each sculpture.
   - ▲ By the end of the semester, electronic Artwork should be attached to an e-mail sent to:

     Amanda Hostalka, Professor of Art
     ahostalka@stevenson.edu

     Be sure to include your name, phone number, and e-mail address in the message.
   - ▲ 2-D and 3-D artwork will be photographed, after which you'll be notified to pick up your artwork.
   - ▲ Copyrights for artwork published in *Spectrum* will revert to the individual artists.

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